

On The Skirmish Line

The Newsletter of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

A New Battle at the Wilderness Battlefield

Over 134 years ago, two great armies marched head-on along the Orange Turnpike in an area called the Wilderness. The Battle of the Wilderness, the first battlefield clash of Generals Robert E. Lee and U.S. Grant in May of 1864, was a vicious two-day battle with over 26,000 casualties and no clear winner. Now there is a new battle brewing in the Wilderness, pitting the National Park Service against the Orange County supervi-

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Civil War Trust Preservation Award

During the National Park Service's Fourth National Conference on Battlefield Preservation in Charleston, SC, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust was presented the first ever Civil War Trust Preservation Award.

The Civil War Trust recognized the CVBT for its outstanding accomplishments in saving vital Civil War battlefields from certain destruction. The Civil War Trust noted that the CVBT, founded less than two years ago, has already saved well over 100 acres, including 8.3 acres at Marye's Heights in Fredericksburg. The CVBT joined forces with the National Park Service and The Civil War Trust in the preservation of Marye's Heights in 1996.

CVBT board member Steve Stanley stated, "It is an honor to receive this award on behalf of our members. The CVBT is pleased and gratified to have worked with The Civil War Trust since our inception in 1996 and look forward to

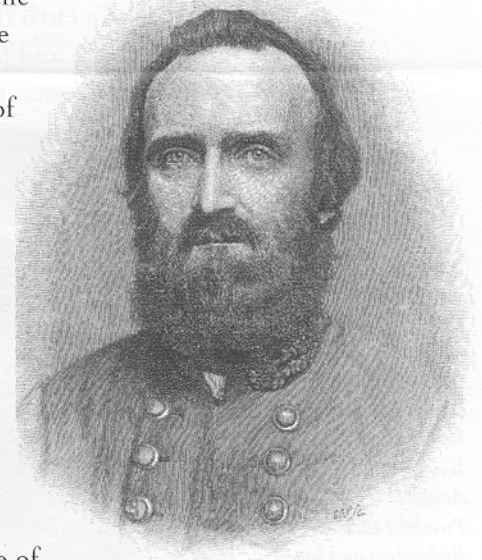
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CVBT's Land Purchase: *Jackson's Flank Attack*

The Trust has already purchased a 5 acre tract of land in the western part of the Chancellorsville battlefield and is actively pursuing others. This area is where Stonewall Jackson launched his flank attack on the afternoon of May 2nd, 1863. The site includes of a prominent plateau upon which units of the Union's 11th Corps deployed, facing south. Throughout the day, as Jackson's force moved across their front,

Federal pickets reported the Confederate activity in the woods to the south of the Orange Turnpike. Many of these troops had fought Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley and knew he was capable of hard marching to turn up in unexpected places. The Federal chain of command, however, did not fully appreciate their opponent and discounted the intelligence they received until Jackson's line of battle slammed into the Union flank.

The National Park Service is seeking to purchase acreage north of the Orange Turnpike (State Route 3) where much of the subsequent fighting occurred. The Park Service, however, is not allowed to acquire property south of Route 3 because this area is not within their Congressionally authorized boundary. The Trust has begun to look south of Route 3 to compliment the Park Service effort and help to preserve a more



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From The Archives

A Soldier's Account of Jackson's Flank Attack

The following text is taken from a regimental history of one of the many units that fought at Chancellorsville. The title is **Trials and Triumphs: The Record of the Fifty-Fifth Ohio Volunteer Infantry**, by Hartwell Osborn. This account highlights the action near the Trust's latest property acquisition.

"All that May morning was marked by a strange quiet which settled down upon the Corps as the soldiers rested in line Since 11 a.m., the picket line of the Fifty-Fifth Ohio,

.....

CVBT Receives Award

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future collaborations. With the efforts of The Civil War Trust and those of our members, we can curb the destruction of our nation's heritage and preserve hallowed grounds for future generations."

under Captain Robbins, had been sending in every half-hour reports of a movement in our front to the right. Two or three shots were heard, first to our left, then in front, then to the right, and rumor spread about that pickets had heard artillery moving in our front As the afternoon wore away the reports from the pickets came in often and were so specific and imperative that Colonel Lee of the Fifty-fifth took the men to brigade headquarters, and then, with General McLean, to division headquarters, expressing his deep concern and anxiety and requesting some immediate action. General Devens received the information coldly, and upon the third visit grew impatient, and at last said to Colonel Lee, "You are frightened, sir," with another remark about Western colonels being more scared than hurt. Colonel Richardson, of the Twenty-fifth Ohio, brought in four scouts who had been far to the front and reported that the enemy were massing on our right. General Devens directed General McLean to send him back to his regiment. . . . But the most convincing evidence was from an artillery officer . . .

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PHOTO BY STEVEN STANLEY



National Park Superintendent Sandy Rives presents The Civil War Trust Preservation Award to CVBT President Enos Richardson and board member Carroll Hayden.

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Historical Groups and Round Tables **Support the Trust's Mission**

Civil War Round Tables and other groups have shown themselves to be strong supporters of the Trust's mission to acquire battlefield land. It is our privilege to count many such organizations as members and to recognize their contributions here:

The following groups have donated up to \$250

Baltimore Civil War Round Table (Baltimore, MD)
Brandy Station Foundation (Brandy Station, VA)
Capt. James I. Waddell CSN Camp — SCV (Millersville, MD)
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Spotsylvania Preservation Foundation (Spotsylvania, VA)
The American Civil War Round Table (London, England)
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Trevilian Station Battlefield Foundation (Trevilians, VA)
Twin Cities Civil War Round Table (Minneapolis, MN)

The following groups have donated up to \$500:

Company F, 55th Virginia Regiment (London, England)
Roanoke Civil War Round Table (Roanoke, VA)
The Civil War Foundation (Berryville, VA)
The Civil War Round Table of New York, Inc. (New York, NY)

The following groups have donated up to \$1,000:

Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table (Glenmoore, PA)
North Shore Civil War Round Table (Huntington, NY)
The Robert E. Lee Civil War Round Table of
Central New Jersey (Avenel, NJ)

The following groups have donated up to \$2,500:

Civil War Round Table of Eastern Pennsylvania, Inc. (Allentown, PA)
Old Baldy Civil War Round Table (Richmond, VA)

The following groups have donated up to \$5,000:

Capital District Civil War Round Table (Albany, NY)
Simpson History Complex (Hillsboro, TX)

The following group has donated more than \$5,000:

Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table (Fredericksburg, VA)

CVBT Makes FundRaising Easy

In appreciation of the outstanding participation from the Round Tables and other organizations, the Trust would like to reciprocate. Artist Don Troiani has provided the Trust with a number of his more recent historical print. We will provide one of these to any round table or historical group that wants to use it as a means to raise funds for the Trust. One of the prints available is the dramatic "Jackson is With You" which depicts Stonewall Jackson at a critical moment at the Battle of Cedar Mountain. The other print is "Fire on Caroline Street" showing the 20th Massachusetts Infantry engaged in street fighting in Fredericksburg on December 11, 1862. Groups who want to take advantage of these prints should contact the Trust office at the address shown on the newsletter or by e-mail to <webmaster@cvbt.org>. This offer will remain in effect until the supply of prints is gone.

The Death of Our Nation's Heritage

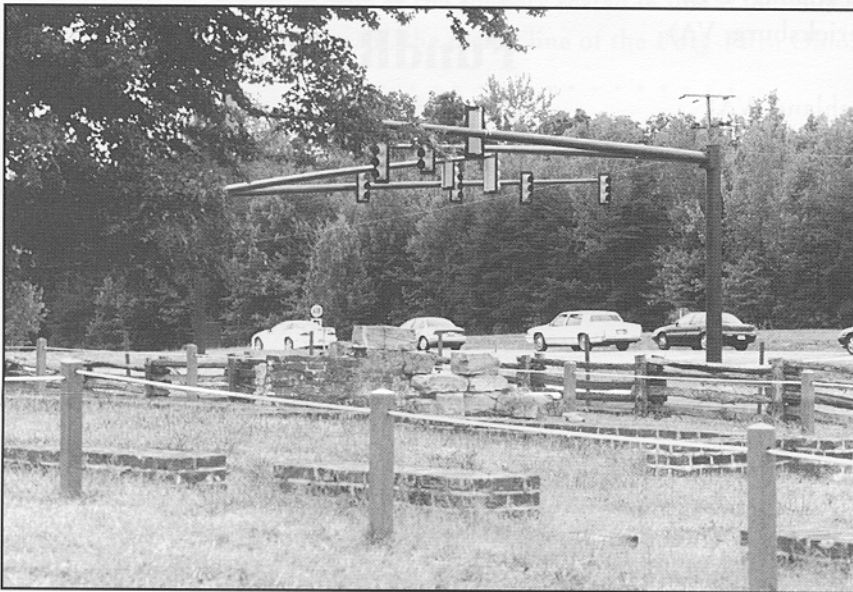
A new traffic signal at the historic Chancellorsville crossroads illustrates, in rather brutal terms, that the greatest threat to the Central Virginia battlefields is a sprawl development creeping across the countryside. Countless subdivisions consume more and more land and the new households generate the demand for retail centers, which in turn also get carved out of the landscape. Chancellorsville, the place where two historic roads intersect, is the true

Park Service is allowed to acquire in order to maintain the values of the existing park. In this instance, the commercial encroachment that began years ago with a gas station, now includes banks, parking lots, and grocery stores with the ultimate result that this land (even though within the Congressionally-authorized boundary) is no longer worth obtaining.

The driving forces of this cycle of land consumption are publicly-funded highways that make more and more real estate accessible for development. Investors and developers are always willing to build more houses where someone else's money (yours and mine) has made the land more valuable. Publicly-funded highways, also, allow many firms to reduce their on-site investment and seek greater profits through more exacting shipping and receiving standards. One result of such flexibility is that they can more readily relocate to a more lucrative location, where yet another new highway has been built for example, with little concern for the locality they leave behind. This type of development occurs in a continuing cycle that appears to have no logical conclusion.

Since the 1950s, the federal government has been consistently forthcoming with massive funding for highways. The American landscape has been drastically changed as a consequence. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) began to shift the focus of federal spending to other transportation needs, but the entrenched road building industry and powerful special interests have sought to hold onto funding that is dedicated to their lifeblood — roads. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) carries over many of the provisions of ISTEA, but contains such massive amounts of money that many highways that should be reconsidered because of their adverse impact to our heritage and the communities are being pushed toward construction instead.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is planning to construct a beltway around the City of Fredericksburg. This project would cut



Suburban development encroaches onto the battlefields everyday, as this photo of a stoplight at the Chancellorsville ruins illustrates.

high tide of the Confederacy. This ground is where the wings of Lee's army reunited on the afternoon of May 3, 1863 — in the climax of an absolutely astonishing victory. One cannot truly understand the Gettysburg Campaign without understanding Chancellorsville, yet there is now a stoplight to compromise what used to be a spellbinding setting. Next will come a demand for publicly owned battlefield land to be given up for left turn lanes and the encroachment on our collective heritage will continue.

This incremental destruction is quite real. There is now a major grocery store within the Congressionally-authorized boundary of the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park. While the National Park itself is owned by the federal government, and by extension the people of the United States, the authorized boundary encompasses the area the National

Nation's Heritage from page 4

through the historic United States Ford area on the Rappahannock River and then slice toward the Chancellorsville battlefield. This highway would traverse undeveloped land which would become quite valuable through this publicly funded access. The economic dynamics of a new highway and intersection with the existing State Route 3 would overwhelm the Chancellorsville battlefield. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has noted that this road project is one of the cumulative threats to the Chancellorsville battlefield.

A recent visitor from Pennsylvania was appalled at the condition of Chancellorsville when he brought his son to Virginia to share in the experience of history. The following is his cry of alarm to one of our member organizations:

"My son Joe and I spent Monday and Tuesday touring some of the battlefields of Spotsylvania County. We covered Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville in depth and skimmed through the Wilderness before lack of time forced us to break it off and head north. This was Joe's first trip and, despite the heat, he couldn't get enough of it. Needless to say, it gave me great pleasure to watch his interest in the Civil War developing.

However, this article is not a celebration of a father/son bonding trip. It is about something much darker. Four very large and important Civil War battles were fought totally or in part in Spotsylvania County. Very little of that land is protected and, tragically, much of it is, in grave danger of being buried under asphalt, concrete, housing subdivisions and other accouchements of urban sprawl.

The shopping centers and strip malls on Virginia Route 3 (once a lazy two lane highway, now transformed into a six lane parking lot) are moving relentlessly westward. There are several new traffic signals and more lanes being added. Salem Church can barely be noticed for all the surrounding clutter.

The newly installed traffic signals at the intersection of Route 3 and Plank Road are hideous. As we stood there looking at the ruins of the Chancellor house, I described the fight

for Chancellorsville, the ordeal of the wounded men and the civilians, and Lee's triumphant entry onto the scene, to the accompaniment of the throbbing basses of the stereo system of cars temporarily stopped waiting for the light to change.

All of this will be further exacerbated when/if the Virginia Department of Transportation constructs a 95 by-pass around Fredericksburg. This will swing to the west and intersect with Route 3 very close to the eastern boundary of the Chancellorsville battlefield. You know what additional development problems this will bring. I could go on, but you probably get the point.

All of this highlights what Bob Krick said when he spoke at the Preservation Banquet in August, "Save it or Pave it." Obviously the former option is preferable, but there is very little time left. It appears that the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust is going to carry the ball. They have the knowledge and expertise to do this. What they need is our financial support, both individually and collectively (i.e. the round table).

I first saw this area 15 years ago. It certainly wasn't pristine then, but compared to what it is now, it was the Garden of Eden. In another 15 years what hasn't been saved will be gone forever. The saving has to come now."

The CVBT continues to challenge the notion that sprawl will prevail in Central Virginia. We operate without paid staff, though, unlike the bureaucracies and developers who confront us. Instead, we use member donations to purchase battlefield land for this and future generations. Some members have suggested that we maintain better contact with our membership. We make no apologies for providing little more than a quarterly newsletter. If it help, think of us as the forward elements of an advancing army. Our task is to gain ground and move on. The niceties will have to be undertaken by others.

Ed. note: We would like to thank Michael Snyder of the Civil War Round Table of Eastern Pennsylvania for sharing his thoughts on the destruction of Central Virginia Battlefields.

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Road Encroachment from page 1

sors, and again along the Orange Turnpike.

The Orange County supervisors have proposed to widen State Route 20 (historic Orange Turnpike) to four lanes. The proposal will require Wilderness battlefield land to be destroyed to make room for the additional lanes. The National Park Service is adamant in its opposition of the widening, but has offered to help explore alternative routes

such as a southern bypass of the park.

The most significant portion of the battlefield to be destroyed would be Saunder's Field. Not only would a vista that looks as it did over 134 years be destroyed, but also very well preserved Confederate breastworks would disappear.

Orange County supervisor Mark Johnson said, "I know what I want is four lanes through

the battlefield. I think it can be done. We need to get serious about it."

The Orange County Board of Supervisors has since rejected a plan recommended by their own committee to study future traffic needs of the county. After six months of studies, the committee recommended an alternative route between Route 621 (Orange Plank Road) and Route 20. The new route would take a southerly route skirting the park and join up with Route 20 west of the battlefield. The Park Service has promised to help obtain the funds for this or any other bypass, to minimize the financial impact of the new road to the county.

Supervisor Mark Johnson said the county will wait out the park service stating, "We've got all the time in the world. It might be 15 years before it gets taken care of." Johnson said he will not spend extra money to avoid the battlefield. He says Route 20 can probably be widened without even moving a tree.

But Johnson admits that widening the road will cause an impact on the park. "Certainly I think we're willing to work with them to keep the intrusion into the park as minimal as possible, but we need two more lanes," he said.

National Park officials are just as determined to resist the widening. Park Superintendent Sandy Rives said, "To see this as the easiest way through is not an alternative, because then we're saying the battlefield is not important."

To widen the road through the Wilderness battlefield would take an act of Congress, because Virginia Department of Transportation does not have the right of way to add lanes through the park.

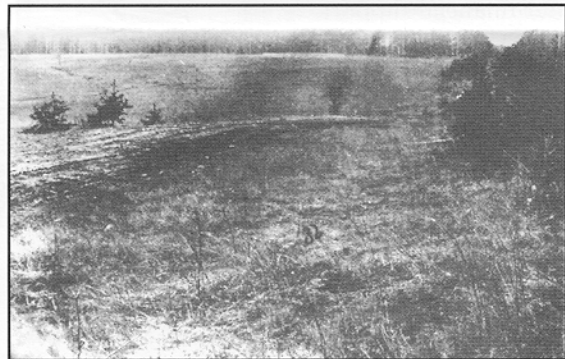
Rives states, "The Wilderness battlefield is federally protected. The land cannot be condemned. It's a national treasure set aside in perpetuity by the Congress . . . to preserve this land forever."

The fight over this historically significant road and the land surrounding it has just begun. Orange supervisors are seeking the help of the Congress to widen the road. If Congress will not intervene, however, they will have no choice but to seek alternate routes.

If the Wilderness battlefield is to be protected, it is the American people that must do the protecting. Let Congress know that you are against any proposal for the widening of Route 20 through the Wilderness battlefield and that you support the alternate routes.



PHOTO BY STEVEN STANLEY



National Park Service

The widening of Route 20 will have a huge impact Saunder's Field which remains virtually unchanged in over 134 years. **Top Photo:** Modern Route 20 (Orange Turnpike) through Saunder's Field. **Btm Photo:** 1888 photo of the Orange Turnpike through Saunder's Field (large bush at right is location of Exhibit Shelter).

From the Archives from page 2

Captain Hubert Dilger, of Battery I, First Ohio Artillery, was a trained artilleryman holding a commission in the Baden Mounted Artillery, and on leave of absence to enable him to take part in our war. About 2 P.M. Captain Dilger determined to investigate the rumors of a large force on our right, and with an orderly rode west beyond our line after vigorous remonstrance from Colonel von Gilsa, who was very much disturbed and anxious over the situation. Captain Dilger soon ran into the enemy and had much difficulty in escaping capture . . . but he at last eluded his pursuers, and about 4:30 P.M. reported, first at corps headquarters, and then, by direction of General Howard, to army headquarters, where he says a long-legged major of cavalry laughed at his story and refused to allow him to report . . . About 5:30 P.M. General Devens rode down our line and, halting just in rear of the Fifty-Fifth Ohio, had some conversation with a captain of

cavalry . . . While they were talking a shell from the came right down the road and burst right over our heads . . . There was a scattering of mounted men and non-combatants, and the line stood to arms . . . Scattered shots and volley firing began on the extreme right, and along our front deer and wild game came scurrying out of the woods. The firing increased to a roar and soon came nearer. The right was steadily falling back. The right regiment of the brigade, the Seventy-fifth Ohio, having changed front, now began firing, and bullets began to hail down our line from right and rear. We had no enemy in front and yet had no orders to change front. It was the most trying experience the command ever endured . . . The men of the right brigade now began to come back in panic. The open ground to our rear was a mass of yelling Butternuts as the left of Jackson's line charged the three batteries of reserve artillery and the two regiments . . . upon the Ely's Ford road. The Twenty-fifth Ohio at last changed front and began to fire. The Fifty-Fifth formed behind it. After about three volleys the Twenty-fifth broke. The Fifty-Fifth held for two volleys and then broke back, and the whole clearing became one mass of panic-stricken soldiers flying at the top of their speed."

This soldier's account continues by describing the aftermath of battle.

"The field hospital at the Talley House was a scene of pain, distress, and anguish for seven or eight days. Several thousand wounded men of both sides lay on the ground, receiving such scanty attention as the small force of surgeons from both armies could render. The operating-tables were like butchers' blocks. The dying and dead lay among the living, and burial parties were very slow in removing the dead. Finally food gave out and many must have starved but for the supply of whiskey and condensed milk which had been sent over for our relief by permission of General Lee, it being our only resource."

CVBT's Land Purchase

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complete battlefield. The Trust's focus on the area south of Route 3 will provide three benefits. First, this roadway is a gateway from the west into the Chancellorsville battlefield. Preserving land on both sides of the road has a strong visual impact, much as the Trust purchase of McLaw's Wedge did on the eastern approach. Second, this plateau is a prominent feature in this part of the battlefield and the Union troop positions can be clearly identified and interpreted. Jackson's genius was to hit this line on its flank, making it immediately untenable. Third, this terrain can help show why the flank attack faltered south of the Turnpike and also includes archeological sites where wartime farm buildings stood (most of the other wartime structures in the flank attack area have already succumbed to modern pavement.

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In a constant endeavor to keep our costs down, the CVBT will not send out reminders for membership renewal. Instead, we will publish a renewal form in all issues of "On The Skirmish Line". Please check your mailing label to see if your membership is due for renewal and clip out the form above and send it back to our office. If your membership is current, but you know of someone who would like to join, please pass this membership form on to them. The CVBT would be glad to include them in our ever growing list of members.



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